

Managing & Caring for your People

Objective

The face of mission and ministry in the 21st century is a changing one – and the Church of England wanted to equip its Bishops and Senior Staff Team Colleagues (a population of over 250 people) with the skills and confidence to be responsive to the diverse people and communities they serve. Steps was asked to bring an experiential dynamic to the workshop, the second in a series allowing delegates to consider their individual roles and responsibilities in the creation of a healthy working environment in which mission and ministry is enabled to flourish. Sessions took place in Bristol, York, Leicester and London. Objectives stated that delegates should:

- Be better acquainted about the key ingredients that make for a healthy working environment in which individuals and the mission of the Church can flourish;
- Have refreshed and deepened their knowledge of key employment and ecclesiastical legislation relating to the selection, appointment and deployment of employees and clergy;
- Have practised their skills of judgement in relation to a number of people related issues;
- Have identified areas where further personal and team development in relation to team skills is important; and
- Be committed to take timely, specific actions about people issues within their diocese.

Solution

Interactive scenarios brought real life situations and challenges to life through drama – and this, combined with group ‘coaching’ (forum theatre), facilitated discussion and hotseating, allowed delegates to explore their own and others’ behaviour, in a safe space. They could also practise their skills of judgement and people management when faced with some credible and carefully researched workplace situations. Steps facilitators had to take on the roles of Bishops, Archdeacons and Vicars - and represent these characters with conviction and realism. They succeeded – with many delegates commenting on how accurately their world was reflected.

In addition to the ‘people skills’ focus, the session also explored how best to mitigate risks in the selection, training for ministry, appointment and deployment of clergy and staff. We worked alongside the NCI’s legal team and colleagues from Herbert Smith Freehills, who helped to debrief each of the scenarios presented and provided legal commentary on the issues raised. Additional insight was offered by Professor Cary Cooper, a world renowned expert on the creation of healthy workplaces, who joined the group via a video Q&A session.

Outcomes

The workshop was highly interactive and the delegates were engaged and very vocal throughout the session. Seeing their actions ‘played out’ meant that the delegates took an active role in their learning, and facilitated discussion allowed peers to work together – promoting a shared sense of partnership, collaboration and team working. Small group work allowed individuals to identify areas where further personal and team development could be beneficial – and delegates were invited to commit to taking timely and specific actions in relation to ongoing people issues within their diocese.

“The partnership has worked really well. The Steps team was so enthusiastic, they really caught the excitement of what we wanted to achieve,” says Karen West, Archbishops’ Adviser on Bishops’ Ministry. *“It’s been a really excellent partnership, we’ve enjoyed it loads and it’s been fantastically valuable as a learning experience.”* Sue Morgan Head of HR at the Church of England added, *“It’s been really interesting. Enlightening. Steps ‘get out’ of people a different type of learning. Our people have taken to it greatly – the feedback has been terrific.”*